



Government Administration and Elections Committee
SB 350 An Act Establishing Juneteenth Independence Day as a Legal Holiday

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Flexer, Chairman Fox, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. My name is Ruby Blackmon. I live in New Britain and recently retired from my position as a processing technician at Central Connecticut State University.

I am also the President of AFSCME, Council 4 Local 196 which represents state administrative-clerical workers. I am here to testify in support of SB 350 , An Act Establishing Juneteenth Independence Day as a Legal Holiday. This bill would be an important step towards recognizing America's history and declare Juneteenth as a state holiday.

Juneteenth represents the day federal troops had to be sent to Galveston, Texas to ensure all slaves be freed. This needed to occur even though the emancipation proclamation had been signed 2 years prior to this. Even when the federal government had finally taken steps to end the shameful practice of slavery it still continued and black people had to endure horrifying conditions when they should have been free.

In 1865, freed slaves organized the first celebration that would later become Juneteenth. It was a way for freedmen to celebrate their freedom and as people moved around the country it spread to different communities and continued keeping this holiday alive. Yet, it wasn't until 1979 for a state to finally recognize the pain that slavery caused in this country and make Juneteenth a state holiday. It took another 42 years before the federal government would recognize Juneteenth and established it as a national holiday.

It is a shame that it has taken so long for Juneteenth to even be recognized. It was not even taught in schools until it gained attention over the last few years. This is an important cultural and historical day that should be celebrated and honored by the government that caused so much pain through the practice of slavery. After everything my people have been through, we deserve to have Juneteenth recognized as a holiday.

I want to thank the committee for considering this bill and urge passage.